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PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
— AIR ATTACK —

NO, [redacted]

My fellow Americans:

With a heavy heart, and in necessary fulfillment of my oath of office, I have ordered -- and the United States Air Force has now carried out -- military operations, with conventional weapons only, to remove a major nuclear weapons build-up from the soil of Cuba. This action has been taken under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and in fulfillment of the requirements of the national safety. Further military action has been authorized to ensure that this threat is fully removed and not restored.

~~Let me first tell you what has been going on. What it is that we have had to attack?~~ In sum there have been many rumors of offensive installations in Cuba for some weeks, but it is only within the last week that we have had unmistakable and certain evidence of the character and magnitude of the Communist offensive deployment. What this evidence established beyond doubt is that in a rapid, secret and frequently denied military operation, the Communists were attempting to establish a series of offensive nuclear

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missile bases on the communist island of Cuba. Three of these missile sites contained launchers, 4 to a site, to be loaded with Medium Range Ballistic Missiles, two for each launcher, for a total of 24. Each of these 24 missiles would be capable of carrying a 3000 pound nuclear warhead of about 2 megatons in yield -- or 100 times as destructive as the bomb which destroyed Hiroshima -- for a distance of more than 1000 nautical miles. Twelve other launch pads under construction were designed for intermediate range ballistic missiles -- capable of travelling more than twice as far and causing several times as much destruction -- and thus capable of devastating most of the United States mainland, most of Latin America and most of Canada. In addition, a large number of medium range jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons were being uncased on Cuba, while appropriate air bases were being prepared.

The presence in Cuba of these large, long-range and clearly offensive weapons of sudden destruction constituted a threat to the peace and security of this Hemisphere -- in naked and deliberate defiance of the Rio Pact of 1947,

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the traditions of this nation and Hemisphere, the Joint Resolution of the 87th Congress and my own warnings to the communists on September 4 and 13. This action also contradicted the repeated assurances of Soviet and Cuban spokesmen, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms build-up in Cuba would retain its original defensive character. The size of this undertaking makes clear that it had been planned some months ago. Yet only last month, after I had clearly stated that ground-to-ground missiles would be regarded as an offensive threat, the Soviet Government stated that "the armaments and military equipment sent to Cuba are designed exclusively for defensive purposes . . . there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression, for a retaliatory blow (that is, its strategic or offensive weapons) to any other country, for instance Cuba . . . the Soviet Union has so powerful rockets to carry these nuclear warheads that there is no need to search for sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union." And only last Thursday, as this offensive build-up went on, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told me

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in my office that, "as to Soviet assistance to Cuba, he was instructed to make it clear, as the Soviet Government had already done, that such assistance pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba . . . Training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling defensive armaments was by no means offensive. If it were otherwise, the Soviet Government would have never become involved in rendering such assistance."

The United States of America need not and cannot tolerate defiance, deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. Nuclear weapons are so destructive, and ballistic missiles are so swift, that a sudden shift in the nature of their threat can be deeply dangerous -- especially when the trigger appears to be in the hands of a violent and unstable revolutionary leader. For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States have deployed such weapons around the world with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which balanced off the use of those weapons in the absence of some vital challenge. These deployments are not comparable. Our own weapon systems, such as Polaris and Minuteman, have always

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emphasized invulnerability because they are intended to be retaliatory not offensive, and because our history -- unlike that of the Soviets since World War II -- demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer other nations or impose our system upon them. Nevertheless American citizens have become adjusted to living daily on the bull's-eye of Soviet missiles located inside the USSR or in submarines.

But this sudden and extraordinary build-up of communist missiles in an area well-known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States, ^{in contradiction to} ~~in violation~~ ^{all previous Soviet practice, even with members of the winning Party, in chain} of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy, was ^a provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which could not be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be believed in the future.

If the 1930's taught us any lesson at all, it was that aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, will ultimately lead to war. This nation is opposed to war -- but it is true to its word.

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The discovery of this desperate and enormously dangerous move has required, in the last week, a most searching study of the courses of action open to us. The world can be sure that our choice of rapid, sure and minimum ^{force} ~~fire~~ was made only after all other alternatives had been most searchingly surveyed. Every other course of action involved risk, of delay and of obfuscation which were wholly unacceptable -- and with no prospect of real progress in removing ^{this} ~~their~~ ^{Communist} intolerable nuclear intrusion into the Americans. The size, speed, and secrecy of the deployment, the bare-faced falsehoods surrounding it, and the newly revealed character of the conspirators involved made it plain that no appeal, no warning, no offer would shift them from their course. Prolonged delay would have meant enormously increased danger, and immediate warning would have greatly enlarged the loss of life on all sides. It became my duty to act.

(Follows a description of first reports of action.)

The tragedy here -- self-evidently -- is in the loss of innocent lives on all sides. For the United States

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Government I hereby accept responsibility for this action and pledge that all appropriate efforts will be made, on request, to assist the families of these innocent victims. Neither Cubans nor Russians, as individuals, can be held accountable for the extraordinary and irresponsible conspiracy which has required this action. This was Communist militarism in action -- neither more nor less.

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We are, of course, reporting our actions at once to the Organization of American States and the United ~~XXXXXX~~ Nations. We shall ask the first for support and the second for understanding. We believe that the world will be relieved that a new threat of nuclear terror has been kept out of the Americas; ~~and that~~ the documentary evidence we shall be able to present will make the necessity of our action clear to all who care for freedom.

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The nuclear age is one of great danger, inevitably. Perhaps the most dangerous of all its aspects is the hazard that the will and determination of this nation may be overtaken by that force that aims so openly and so ruthlessly at world domination. If we had allowed the present plot to

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succeed, that danger would have been multiplied.

As it is, we remain, as we have been right along, steadfastly determined to do our best to limit the world's dangers and lower its tensions. We are prepared ourselves to consider with the Soviet Union and with all Governments how sudden and clandestine threats of the sort may be prevented, for all of us. We remain steadfast to all our other commitments -- and in particular I should publicly emphasize that we are more determined than ever to defend the freedom of West Berlin. And I remind you that no one has ever tried, either openly or covertly, to make West Berlin a military base -- much less a nuclear threat.

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Now what of the future?

First, I ask that the American people remain calm and self-confident and go about their business. There will be no major war; the strength and determination of your defenses are answer against that.

Second, the military blockade of Cuba will continue until other effective assurances can be obtained against repetition of this conspiracy.

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Such a blockade can clearly be authorized both by the requirements of US self-defense and by the Organ of Consultation of the Organization of American States, acting under Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty and this year's Punta del Este Resolution. All ships bound for Cuba, from whatever nation or port will be halted and searched -- and those containing cargoes of weapons or refusing to halt will be dealt with appropriately under the rules of international law. Such a blockade may be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carrier.

Third, I have directed our military forces to continue and increase their close surveillance of Cuba, as contemplated in the OAS Communique of October 6; to take further military action, if necessary, against offensive capabilities, and finally, to regard any missile that might possibly remain and be launched from Cuba as an attack by the Soviet Union requiring a massive retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

Fourth, as a military precaution, I have reinforced our base at Guantanamo, evacuated the dependents of our personnel there and ordered additional military units to stand by on an alert basis.

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Fifth, I am asking Soviet Chairman Khrushchev to meet with me at the earliest opportunity with respect to the prevention of any further conspiracies which may strain the relations between our two countries. We do not wish to war with the Soviet Union -- we are a peaceful people who desire to live in peace with all other peoples. I am prepared to discuss with the Soviet Chairman how both of us might remove existing tensions instead of creating new ones. Our attitude on this was only recently shown in our acquiescence in the Iranian Government's announcement that it would not permit the establishment of foreign missile bases upon its territory -- and in our efforts to halt the testing and spread of nuclear weapons, and to end the arms race and all overseas bases in a fair and effective treaty. But we could not negotiate with a gun at our heads -- a gun that imperiled innocent Cubans as well as Americans. Our byword is: "Negotiation yes, intimidation no".

Finally, I have directed the United States Information Agency to use all available resources in making clear our position to the unhappy people of Cuba. We have no quarrel

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with the Cuban people, only sympathy and hope. They did not consent to the building of this intolerable threat. Their lives and land are being used as pawns by those who deny them freedom. We have no wish to war on them, or impose any system upon them. Our objective, on the contrary, is to give them back the dream of their revolution -- the dream which Fidel Castro repudiated when he sold them out to the communists who may now sell him out in turn. Our objective in the world is peace and freedom -- including the peace and freedom of the Cuban people.

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